have already noticed we have instanced sufficient to render evident a wider development of those institutions whose aim is the permanent benefit of society, founded on sure principles of giving to each individual an interest in the general welfare, and the promotion and preservation of those privileges which are the great bonds that bind humanity and consolidate the institutions from which those advantages arise. We trust that we have now sufficiently dwelt upon this era of architecture to strengthen the belief of our readers in the correctness of our argument; and that although but imperfectly developed, our conclusions will, we hope, be found in the main true and reasonable. We believe we have again rendered sufficiently obvious the progression of human intelligence attested by architectural records, silent but truthful and impartial historians of the social condition of their age. If the vices of old Rome were greater than those of ancient Greece, yet were her virtues higher and more numerous, as in nature the deepest shade ever accompanies the brightest light. If Greece could boast of more illustrious names amongst her sons, yet in Rome the diffusion of talent was the more general: if the institutions of the one were the more magnificent, in the other they possessed the higher merit of being more calculated to promote the common good: if the intellectual flame of the former were the more brilliant, with the latter it was the more steady and generally diffused: if the Greeks were eminent for individual virtues, the Romans shone conspicuous in those which distinguish the citizen and advance the prosperity of a republic. He who surpassed in eloquence at the Olympic games received the highest reward that Greek ambition could aspire to—a wreath of bay: to the Roman who saved the life of a fellow-citizen was decreed a mural crown.

But it was written, "Rome shall perish," and in a flood of barbarism her once mighty power was annihilated and extinguished; but she had served her purpose in the great career of humanity, and the whirlwind which swept alike arts and empire from her grasp was destined to invigorate society, to distribute fresh life and energy through the enervated frame of the civilised world.

Having concluded the Roman period of the art, at which, although we have taken but a cursory glance, we yet trust it will be sufficient to render clear and distinct to our readers the views we have adopted, the wider development of which in this paper the want of space necessarily precludes, we now proceed to consider the sixth age, which, from its peculiar characteristics, we have deemed proper to denominate the Gothic Ecclesiastic, or Religious Age, from the fact of the ecclesiastic being the paramount and distinguishing power of the epoch, and therefore stamping the structures of the time with those peculiar features from which we have adopted the name which we have applied to distinguish this age of the art.

Although the ecclesiastic period is apparently less marked by any actual advance in the social condition of the era, or by any vast development of the intellect of the human race, we yet hope we may be able to convince our readers that our views in this instance are not only tenable, but that after a fair examination of its peculiar attributes and features, we may claim for the sixth age a degree of importance which it has hitherto been but imperfectly understood to possess, and which, if studied aright, will be found to occupy a most important page in social history. To the Gothic age belong those religious edifices which abound in the majority of the middle age cities of Western Europe, and which at once distinguish the period with a character so marked and definite as to render it unnecessary for us to consider its characteristics in respect of these peculiar structures. At no period of the history of the art does it more clearly attest the contemporary social position. To the convulsion and tumult with which society had been distracted at the close of the Roman period, had succeeded an interval of repose and lassitude, the reaction consequent upon a previous state of intense excitement and social disturbance. This period of quietude was eminently fitted for the cultivation of the peaceful arts: circumstances had occurred which had given a new impulse to the energies and intellectual powers of mankind, and a new field had been opened for their exertion, a new religion had arisen whose creed was eventually to extend its influence from pole to pole, which was to embrace the whole brotherhood of humanity, and whose spirit was universal charity and sympathy, which allowed of no mean distinction of class or caste, and which placed the prince and peasant on an equal level. Is then a religion whose principles are the binding of humanity into one grand family, which declares our existence in this world as inseparably connected with our future being, which was to breathe into our nature the noblest sentiment that has ever inspired the mind of man, and whose whole spirit was love,—is such a religion to be considered as inferior, as less noble, less exalted, less expanding to the mind, as tending less to the unity of the races of mankind, than the one which it had superseded, whose basis was fear, superstition, and idolatry, whose rites were mystic, and whose success and extension were in proportion to the degradation of humanity? If it be so, then do we acknowledge that our attempt to shew the development of mankind has been utterly fruitless, and that we have entirely failed in our argument; but if, as we believe, the Christian religion is at once better, nobler, grander, and more exalted in its nature than the heathen creed which preceded it, we venture to urge that our labour has not been entirely wasted, nor our efforts in vain and useless. To admit, therefore, the superiority of the religion of Christ over that which obtained in previous ages is at once to allow a marked progression in the human mind, for it follows as a necessary condition that those thoughts and ideas which tend most to the ennoblement of our nature tend also most to its expansion and development. Now it is evident that that which testifies advance and development must be of a superior nature to that over which the advancement is shewn, and it must be therefore regarded as even a logical conclusion that the architectural features of the age marking the extended condition of humanity must necessarily themselves have advanced in a corresponding degree, and we, therefore, contend that we have satisfactorily proved the progression claimed for the sixth age in common with all the other periods.

Let it not be for a moment imagined by our readers that we attempt to claim a superiority for this age in points of *pure beauty* of the art: in *that* quality we have already specified the Greek period as the climax—an opinion to which we adhere, but we reiterate that we treat the subject of the art in this paper, in an ethic rather than an æsthetic point of view, and that we regard its adaptation to the welfare of society as the highest attribute of architecture in common with every other branch of human wisdom. "Knowledge," says Dr. Combe, "only becomes valuable in proportion as it is rendered subservient to the improvement and happiness of man." All art can therefore only pretend to the highest claim in proportion as it tends to the advancement of this.

We have called this the religious age, nor was the prevalence of priestcraft amongst the least of the peculiarities which demonstrated advance, for we have seen that the Roman epoch was one peculiarly marked by a purely physical character. "It is better," says Macaulay, "that men should be governed by priestcraft than by brute violence; by such a prelate as Dunstan, than by such a warrior as Penda. A society sunk in ignorance and ruled by mere physical force has great reason to rejoice, when a class, of which the influence is intellectual and moral, rises to the ascendancy; such a class will doubtless abuse its power, but mental power, even when abused, is still a nobler and better power than that which consists in mere corporeal strength."

We have, then, before us the most undoubted proofs of the superiority of this over the fifth age. We have architectural structures marking a religious era in contradistinction to the physical one which preceded; nor is it to be supposed that these edifices record the advance of society in a religious light alone. The life of comparative leisure followed by the professors of religion led naturally to the study of both the physical and moral sciences, to which the seclusion of a monastery was eminently favourable, and in these hours of leisure and relaxation were made many of those grand discoveries of which posterity has reaped the benefit. New truths were discovered, which were to guide the intellects of future generations, and in those lonely silent cells was it that often were brought to light many of those wonderful relations of science that have from time to time effected a marked change in the condition of humanity. Attracted by the sanctuary of the monastery, and by the employment to which it naturally gave rise, numerous and powerful communities had generally established themselves in the vicinity, and in most instances these have formed the nucleus of those towns, whose rapid extension is a feature so remarkable in the present day, and as each one of these communities were assembled and increased, so were tightened the bonds of society, so was liberty developed and oppression resisted; each man, allying himself with his fellow for the preservation of liberty and property, and for security against the rapine and tyranny of the lawless and powerful nobles, valued his freedom the more as its certainty was thereby secured to him, and he could demand those rights to which he was justly entitled; and it was this consciousness of gradually increasing power and importance which gave to the burgher of the middle ages that spirit of manly independence and maintenance of his rights against tyranny and oppression which is at once a remarkable feature of the age and a striking instance of mental progression, and which at length established a system,—again we quote Macaulay,—"which taught the fiercest and mightiest ruler that he was—like the meanest bondsman—a responsible agent."

And now, in concluding this age of architecture, let us remark, that the impression conveyed by the edifices of the period are eminently those which fit the mind for objects of a devotional character. "It is difficult," says a modern writer, "for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions as does a cathedral of the best Gothic taste." The essential difference in this respect is, that the first calls forth our admiration, whilst the latter ever inspires us with a sentiment of adoration, and infuses into our minds that devotional feeling of awe which the *infinity* of Gothic architecture is wonderfully calculated to produce.

We hope and believe that we have now rendered clearly manifest to our readers a marked superiority of the religious over the Roman period and the preceding one; and although the earlier portion of the Gothic era embraces the period of history known as the "Dark Ages" ("so called," observes a caustic and observant writer, "because we are so little acquainted with them"), yet we trust we have shown that although without those brilliant minds which shed a lustre on preceding ages, the condition of mankind had advanced on the whole to a far higher standard; the wave of progression had still rolled on, impetuous and resistless; the destiny of man was yet higher and nobler.

A marked change was approaching; silently and imperceptibly the distinctive features of a religious age of architecture were giving way before a state of things, in comparison to which the wonders of all preceding periods sink into mere insignificance. It was not to be supposed but that the grand discoveries which the deep thought of the mighty minds of an eminently studious epoch had made known, were to pave the way to an order of social existence which the philosophy of the ancients had never dreamt of. The boasted structures of Egypt; the majesty and dignity of Greek art; the monuments of the power and grandeur of old Rome, and the dim mystery and deep sentiment of Gothic architecture were now to be embraced in one

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